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A Weekly Publication

OF

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PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

PLYMOUTH PULPIT.

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THE BEAUTY OF MORAL QUALITIES.

SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 16, 1869.

"LET your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."—MATT. v. 16.

THIS is the application of the exhortation contained in a figure just preceding, where the Saviour declares that his people are like unto a city set upon an hill, which can not be hid; that they are like a candle which is placed upon a candlestick, that it may give light everywhere in the house. So men are, in their Christian relations, to be luminous and conspicuous.

The employment in Scripture of the figure of light to represent moral qualities is universal. It began early. It continued to the end of the record. Nor is there any inflection, apparently, of meaning, which is not already used. Ingenuity can scarcely find a way of illustrating moral truth by the use of light, or the modes of light, that has not been employed in Scripture. And the more clearly we study, the more close is the absolute analogy—for it is more than illustration; it is analogy.

Without dwelling upon this—coming back to it by and by in the discussion—I proceed to say,

1. The moral qualities enjoined in Christianity are in the highest sense *natural*—not artificial; not secondary; not newly superinduced, or created by God's spirit upon the mind. They are natural, yet not in the sense in which we have been taught to disbelieve in the natural fruits of the mind. I mean that they are not after-thoughts of God. The qualities which we call "Christian," and the experiences which we call "religious" are not something which is superinduced upon the mind by some after arrangement. They were provided for in the organization of the soul and of the human life. If we may imagine that point at which man was sketched in the divine thought, the divine purpose was to create human beings so that they should bring forth, by their very organization, that which we are seeking to induce in men by Christian teaching. Every man, enlightened by the divine

LESSON: Matt. v. 13-26. HYMNS (Plymouth Collection): Nos. 816, 776, 1181.

Spirit, is therefore called of God back to nature—using the term *nature* in a sense higher and better than the ordinary theological sense.

This word, I have intimated, is used in two senses. The life which men uniformly fall into is called the *natural life.* That is the lower form of life. It is secondary. It is also used to signify the life which was intended, and for which the mind was set up, and secretly stored. This is the higher sense. It is the original, primary one. So that *nature* may mean that nature which God makes, or that nature which man makes. The latter is ignoble and poor, and must be got over. The former is true and noble, and is to be sought.

What I believe, is, that the human mind was constructed so that every faculty in its organization tends to produce, is explicitly invented to bring to pass, those very results which we call Christian qualities. And it is better adapted to be good than to be bad. And the being bad is something interposed between the original creative design and the execution. That is the lapse. That is the fall. God's creative intent, or, if I may so say, the inventive design in the human soul, was, that it should bring out, naturally, by the spontaneous action of every part and faculty of it, just those fruits which we seek now by Christianity.

I believe in *nature,* therefore: not that degraded nature which signifies conduct, but that other nature which signifies creative design—God's original, contemplated plan. And the position which I took was, that the moral qualities which are enjoined in Christianity are, in a higher sense, natural. It is natural for men to be true. That is, they have been built so that that is the proper out-working of their nature. It is natural for men to live conscientiously. Faith is natural. Hope is natural. Love is natural. Benevolence is natural. Spirituality is natural. There has been provision made for it. And it does not alter the fact that there was a creative purpose expressed in the organization of the human soul. Religion is natural. Irreligion is artificial.

2. There is a moral constitution, by reason of which Christian qualities seem admirable to men. It is because men were built to act Christianly, religiously, that when they perceive true Christian qualities, the original nature in them appreciates those qualities. Not at once; because the natural man understandeth not the things of the Spirit. There is a latent capacity to do it. It may be brought within the reach of every man's knowing, though every man may not perceive it.

Moral excellence is beautiful. That can not be proved, except to say that it is the testimony of all men, just in proportion as they are developed into manhood. I do not believe a man's nature lies in the seed. The higher up and the further away a man gets from the crea-

tive point, the nearer he comes to his nature. Men are always talking about going back to nature, and saying that they ought to live so and so, because nature teaches them so and so. You might as well say that the wheat which you bury underground is more near to nature than the whole harvest which comes out of that wheat, and waves, golden, over the field. Is an acorn nearer to nature than an oak tree from that acorn, which has grown a hundred years? Is a knife more a knife when it is shut up than when it is open?

God created men in this world, and created them at the seminal point; and no man is so far from nature—that is, from the sum of all that he was meant to be—as the man that is just born—as nations and individuals in their lower estate. They are nearer *bad* nature, but they are not nearer the divine, creative nature that lies far away, and comes by unfolding, by growing. Which is the vine, the two leaves breaking out of the ground, or that which has grown and covered the trellis? Which is the nearest the vine as it lay in God's mind when he thought of a vine? It is education that brings men to nature. It is civilization that comes nearer to nature than savageism. Nature does not live in the woods, but in populous cities. Nature is not found in ignorance, or weakness, or gross appetites. It is not till men have been taught to live higher than animals, higher than brute, selfish human beings, in the refinements of reason and moral sense, that they begin to touch their real nature. And the further they go up in this direction, the nearer they get to the creative nature that they were meant to develop into.

Now, as men go toward their nature, moral qualities seem beautiful to them. The only evidence which you can allege that moral qualities are beautiful is, that when they are presented to the truest judges they seem beautiful; and the truest judges are those that are the most developed toward their ultimate nature.

There is in physical nature a relation between the eye and the qualities of matter, such that form and color are agreeable to the eye. We hold that the same God who made the eye made the world to be looked at, and that the same God who made the world made the eye to look upon it. There is a relation between one and the other by which combinations of forms and color are beautiful, as they were meant to be.

And yet, though this is universal, and substantially the same in all men, deviations and variations to the contrary notwithstanding—this sense of beauty may be dormant—may not visibly exist to any considerable degree. In certain nations, it may not exist except in its better nature. At the same time, we are all of us satisfied that the eye was made to see beauty, and that the natural world was made to be beautiful for the eye.

That which is true in respect to the eye and the outward world is just as true in respect to the soul's eye and moral beauty. All heathenism and grossness and barbarism do not prevent our seeing that God has made the moral beautiful, and that the race was so made; that there is a preparation of conscience or moral sense such that whatever is beautiful in experience and action has something in every man to respond to it. A man may be a liar; and yet there never was a liar that had not a spot in him where he could not help admiring truth. A man may be a man of passion; and yet there is a spot where reason, dominant over passion, commands his attention and admiration. A man may be vulgar, and coarse, and wicked; and yet there is lying in every man a moral sense which, if you can get at it, and present to it moral truth in its nobler forms and aspects, can not help responding to it. For the eye was not made any more for beauty in the outward world than a man's moral nature was made for beauty in the moral world. All the inflections of benevolence can be made to meet something in every man, and command its approbation. Love, in all its moods and varieties, addresses itself to a corresponding moral sense in every human bosom. Conscience, in all forms of truth, and fidelity, and honesty, and honor, approves itself to every man. Self-denial is beautiful. Not, perhaps, in the monkish representations of it, but in the shape of patience, and endurance, and heroic suffering well borne for one's country. All the world has ever admired self-denial, and faith, and hope, and trust, and courage, and reliance. These qualities have always had audience and admiration, even among savage nations, if they were only made consciously visible. For savage nations appreciate what is in them. The heroes of the world have been made up of qualities which we now understand to be moral qualities. It was not simply brute strength that made the hero: it was brute strength exercised for the sake of some good. That is the lower form of development. The Samsons of history were not great wallowing giants. They were men that suffered for country, and for a cause. And there was the seed of a true heroism in these things.

The heroes of the world have been like early pictures. If you look at the pre-Raphaelite pictures in the galleries of Italy, and what I think to be more significant, the early Flemish and German pictures—for the German nature was more sincere and deep than the Italian nature; the northern nations of Europe were more highly developed morally than the southern—you will see that the artists were feeling after a beautiful thing. Although the drapery looks like tin for stiffness and angularity, and although the postures are some of them excessively stiff, and the grouping childish, you can not stand before Van Eyck's dictures—I could not—without tears in your eyes. They were beautiful, in spite of all the infelicities of an early school of painting. And so

it has been with the heroes of every age of the world. Go back to those men whom nations have reverenced, and set aside the bad painting, and you will find that their characters turned on some moral quality, and that the nation was thrilled, and history was made radiant by it; because the heart answers to every exhibition of moral excellence or moral truth.

Men may not, as I have said, be trained to see than in its finer forms; but there is in every human soul a constitution to which moral qualities appeal, and which can not help responding to them. This is of fundamental importance; and vast use is made of it in Scripture. We shall also make much use of it, as you will see, in the sequel.

Thus, Christian experiences are only higher moral developments of nature in the human soul. God's Spirit brings out in us what our own volition could not achieve. These higher moral states or Christian qualities appeal to the confidence, the admiration, and the sympathy of mankind; and that notwithstanding men hate the light, and oppose good—for I believe that, too. I believe that men hate good—yet I believe that they can not help responding to the presentation of goodness. They oppose light, and yet light is pleasant to them. But because this thing is true, it does not follow that that thing which is in antagonism to it is not true too. You might as well say, "It is impossible for a wheel to have spokes running into the hub from both directions," as to say that there are not opposite truths. Truth is a circle, and there are antagonistic truths on every side of that circle. Men oppose good, and admire good. Men hate good, and appreciate good. Men are admirers of spiritual things, and yet men tread spiritual things under foot, as swine tread pearls underneath their hoofs. Man's lower nature resists the supreme domination of the moral faculties. Men do not like to be ruled by higher ideas than those which possess them. Men that live to eat do not like laws, customs, or any moral advice that teaches them every day that there is a higher way to live. No man likes to have the devil cast out of him. There is as much squealing, and running down hill, and pitching into the sea now, as there was in the time of our Saviour. And you will take notice that, when passions come out of men, they generally take the form of hogs! It is the lower passions, it is the animal after all, that is dispossessed; and that animal resists. But the higher faculties, the moral attributes, have in them a sympathy for the Christ that appears. There is such a relation between our higher nature, and virtue, and piety, and moral beauty, that you can always present one to the other with a confidence that if nature hold true to itself, men will admire that which is true, and right, and divine, and noble. Men with one part of their nature will have a conscience toward God, will have a moral sense for truth and duty; and yet, with another part of their nature, they will resist both.

3. It is upon this state of facts that our Master ordained that men should carry their moral faculties up to the highest degree of excellence. In other words, it is not enough for a man to call himself a Christian, and join himself to a Christian body, as if he had bought his ticket at the office, and placed himself in the appropriate car, and there was nothing more to be done, and he would be carried to his journey's end without any further care on his part. Men think that the church is a kind of railway-car, or steam-packet, and that we have only to get the right one to be safe. They think that denominations are very much like different lines of steamers; and that the runners on each line, crying down the others, and praising their own, are like the members of the different churches, that claim every thing for their own, and give no credit to the others. Men seem to think, "Only let me get into the church that has apostolicity and orthodoxy and catholicity, and I shall have nothing to do but to go to sleep over night; and when I wake up in the morning I shall find myself at my destination. It is the church's business to take me through." That is not the New Testament idea. In New Testament times, there was no church. There was a *brotherhood;* but no such organization as we have. An organized institution I believe in, and we have a right to have; but the New Testament idea of a church was simply a moral society of those who had a common faith, a common hope, and a common love. There was no idea of a church such as has existed since Christ's time. And that church which is the most positive about its apostolicity is the furthest removed from the New Testament idea. There is no church so far from the New Testament idea as that one which thinks it is the New Testament church, and that there is not another church in the world. It is a crustaceous church. It is not the spiritual church. That church which has the most altars, the most vestments, the most externalities, the most things that appeal to the lower nature of men; that church which has the most physical embodiment, and therefore occupies the largest space in men's sight, is the furthest from the true spiritual church. "The kingdom of God is within you," and the true church is always the invisible church. It is the church of spiritual qualities and moral powers, and not of external objects.

Our Master teaches us, that we are to take the moral qualities which come to us at our Christian birth—when we are by the Holy Ghost so re-created that we can start over again, as it were—and use them according to God's word, and not according to human precept or human example. The command, when we begin to live Christian qualities, is, not that we are to live them simply far enough to get into the church, or to be consistent with this, that, or the other church, but that we are to take every one of those Christian qualities,

and carry it up to that point where it shall be beautiful. Great Christian experiences are not merely to be held in their lower forms. We are not simply to have a little of them; but they are to grow so that they shall present themselves to men's eyes as beautiful. There is the nature of beauty in every one of them. There is not one single thing that we are to do or forbear which is not inherently, intrinsically, morally beautiful. And the command of the Master is, that we are to live morally, Christianly, and to carry every Christian quality up in such a shape that it shall be beautiful.

Then, next, it is to be *luminous*. It is not only to be beautiful, but it is to present itself to men's eyes so that they shall say that it is beautiful—so that there shall hardly be a choice left them. I do not care what your opinions are, you never see a heroic act that you stop to ask yourself, "Shall I, or shall I not admire?" You never saw a man throw himself into the water, instantly, after some poor drowning wretch, and seize and bring him out, that you had a chance to ask yourself whether you would admire it or not. The admiration is instantaneous. You never saw a man risk his life for the sake of befriending some poor child that you had time to ask yourself, "Is that, or is it not, to be admired?" You admire first; and some hours afterward you ask whether you ought to. The mind is intuitive and inspirational in such matters, and it is generally right in its moral inspirations and intuitions. No man can read that story of Walter Scott's, "Mid-Lothian," where Effie Deans was on trial for her life, and Jeanie was to bear witness, and the saving of her sister's life just turned on the slightest evasion of the truth, and she could not lie even to save her sister, but had to tell the truth, and see her old father fall dead to the ground, and feel that the terrible enginery of justice must roll over her heart and crush her—no man can read that story (I defy Macchiavelli himself to do it) and not say that it was beautiful to speak the truth under such circumstances. Any single moral quality taken and presented to the human soul strikes that soul's admiration, and it is not left to choose whether it will admire or not. If I say, "Two and two make four," set yourself against it if you will; you can not help yourself, you are obliged to say, "Two and two make four." If I say, "Two from four leaves two," you may cipher upon it as much as you please, and bring as much logic to bear on it as you please, I know that I have God Almighty's truth on my side, and that you will follow me and say so too. Let a man do a noble thing, and the decree of God in the constitution of the human soul makes every body that sees it feel that it is a noble thing. And the command of Christ is, first, that we are to live for these high spiritual qualities; that we are to live for them so largely, that we are to give them such generous growth and culture, that

they shall stand in us in their real beauty; and that then they are to be presented to men so that, in spite of themselves, they will be compelled to *glorify our Father which is in heaven*. That is the function of piety.

The success of the Gospel was made to depend not on preaching —though that was to be an instrument; but upon living men. There is more reasoning in the Saviour's words than we are apt to give to them, when he says, "Ye are our epistles." He had been writing epistles, letters, to the different churches, and he said, in a blessed moment, "What I am writing with ink is not, after all, my letter; you are my letters to the churches and to the world. What I am striving to say by the enginery of human language, that you are saying by the conduct of every single day." And the power of Christianity was not to inhere in its doctrinal scheme—though there was a lower place and function for doctrine; certainly not in its ecclesiastical organization. There was the want of an organization on a much lower plane and in a much lower sphere; but the real and true power of Christianity was in the fact, that the conduct required of the disciple was high up on the moral scale, and that when a man lived a Christian life generously and largely, men could not, by reason of their moral constitution, resist admiration and sympathy, but had to say, "It is right; it is true," and glorify God.

That is the substance of the text, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." It is a network of decrees, deep as the moral constitution of the human soul. It is mighty as the very omnipotence which formed man's life and nature.

In view of this, I remark.

1. Every Christian is so to live that his conduct shall seem holy and beautiful. We are apt to say, "I must live so that I shall be right." But is it your understanding of right, that it can be homely? In the generation of it, in its birth-hour, it may be homely; but right, in its own nature, is intrinsically beautiful. We are apt to say, "I must live justly; I must live so that I shall be at peace with my own conscience." All that is true; but I tell you, there are thousands of persons whose idea of religion is correct in doctrinal matters, but whose doctrine is like a forest in winter—trees in outline; while Christianity is like that same forest in summer, full of leaves and blossoms and fruit. More is necessary than that you should be right. Men often say, "Only let me know that I am right, and that is all I care for." It is not all that you ought to care for. Right should not only be right, but beautiful; and it becomes so in proportion as it works up to its perfect form. Where moral qualities produce an unpleasant effect, it is because they are imperfect. Moral qualities are like fruit. The apple that in January calls forth

my admiration, in June calls forth my detestation, if I taste it. And though morality, when it is the spontaneous laying down of genius and power for a moral purpose is transcendently beautiful, yet that same morality, when it is struggling and trying to be born, or to grow, seems like a poor starveling thing—as it is. But as it becomes stronger, and goes up through childhood, and up through manhood, it increases in symmetry and absolute beauty. You can always test your growth in any grace by the beautifulness of that grace in you; for if it is not beautiful, it is because it is sour; because it is crude; because it is unripe. Therefore, no person whose religion is such as to produce a disagreeable impression in his family is a true Christian. Such persons may escape into heaven; but they go in *so as by fire.* Any person that you live with, and who is less agreeable to you in the respects in which he professes to be a Christian, and who does not make an agreeable impression upon you, is just so far away from Christ. But if I lived where I saw a Roman priest who always produced upon my mind a salutary impression, and in whose conduct was manliness—a beautiful manliness; devoutness—a beautiful devoutness; richness—a beautiful richness; sweetness—a beautiful sweetness, I should instantly say, "This is a Christian man—a model Christian man—in spite of his church, and in spite of his creed." I should instantly take him to be my brother. I should not stop to inquire, "What is your ministry?" If he is living among so many impediments, and has risen above them all; if he is living according to the highest moral standard; if he is living in such a way that I can not help admiring his character—I know that that admiration in me is the testimony of God to the largeness of that man's growth. And on the other hand, if a man is as crystalline as Calvin, and has screwed up every moral quality as carefully as Paganini every string of his violin, and yet it is cacophonous, and his character is not such that I can admire it, I say, "He is not ripe; he is not perfected; I do not see the fruit in him yet." There is nothing so beautiful as the human soul, as God meant it to be. There was no key that was ever struck that had such music as every faculty of the human soul has in it. And when there is complete harmony, when the whole diapason is brought into action, and all the passions become a sub-base, and the feet play them, and the hands play the keys, then the lower tones become a magnificent under-current on which the upper tones float. The passions become more than semi-moral when the upper part of the soul is all radiant and flashing with inspirational attainments. God has never made any thing so beautiful as the whole soul in its majesty of experience.

And this being so, it is the sadness of my life that I get so tired of men as I do. It is my soul's sadness to think that men behave so that I am tired of them. I am tired, tired, tired of nothing so much

as of men. Alas! I am like a music-teacher, that stands the whole day teaching cubs how to paw the keys, and hears things mauled and murdered until his hungry ear dies, almost, with his tasks. And he that is studying to lift up the poor and strengthen the weak is in some sense a moral anatomist, and a morbid one. There are moments of success and triumph when the soul experiences a certain degree of pleasure and satisfaction; but there come times when to depart and be with Christ is a good deal better. And I am ashamed to think that I feel such a sense of relief when I go into the old hoary forest, and the trees seem to me more like companions than men do, and I can move about with a sense of friendliness and sympathy with these things, which neither think, nor feel, nor speak, nor do aught, but which I clothe by my imagination with more human and humane attributes than men wear. The heavens are not more beautiful, there is nothing more beautiful in the forest, or on the sea, or among mighty rivers, or on vast continents, or in the seasons, or the tropics, or at the solitary poles, north or south, so sublime or beauteous as any single soul, if only it threw out its clusters of abundant fruit. God never made any thing else so beautiful as he made man. And woe to the world that men are so homely! Woe to the world that men have sheathed their beauty, and have only thrown out the lower passions —pride, vanity, selfishness—things so harsh, unlovely, hateful, and hating! But oh! it shall not be so always. There is such a thing as the "beauty of holiness." Do you remember that phrase, "The gate Beautiful"? Old Jerusalem had a gate beautiful. The temple had such a gate. And through such a gate every man ought to go to be converted. His moral developments, his zeal, his benevolence, his love, his humility, his meekness, his faith, his hopes, his reliance, his courage, his activity, his self-denial, every one of his moral qualities, ought to be so rounded out, and so carried up, in the heavenly summer, that every one of them should be sweeter than vine or blossoming meadow. Then men would be transcendently beautiful. Twenty men made beautiful in the Lord Jesus Christ would be an army that would sweep around the globe, and nothing could resist them. That man Paul—the greatest man that ever lived on earth, I think—had a soul that is sounding on yet, and that will sound on to the end of time, because it carries in it so much of beauty. Oh! for a church of such men. Oh! for a community of such men. We do not know any thing yet of the power of Christianity.

2. The impressions which a church makes on the moral consciousness of the community in which it lives is a fair test of its life and power. I do not mean that every church will be loved; but I do hold that, even in the imperfection of human development and character, every church is bound to produce in the community an impression that

the average membership lives on a higher plane than other men. We are to make a distinction between individual members and the collective whole. Because there were, among the hundred families at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, or the St. Nicholas, or the Metropolitan, five or six disreputable persons, you would not say that the hotel was disreputable. We know that the bad go with the good. And it is not right to cry down a church, instancing single persons as an index of the whole. There will be traitors in every band. One twelfth of Christ's band of disciples were traitors. But I do not believe one twelfth in this church, or in any of the sister churches round about us, are bad. There are, however, in every church, some that are not worthy to be in it. But the average impression produced by a church in a community upon the best natures in that community, taking it from year to year, is a fair test. That is to say, if I have a seal, and I stamp with it day after day, and men come and look to see what impression is made, and they see that there is some picture there, but can not tell what it is—whether it be dragon, or eagle, or liberty-cap —it is fair to say that that seal does not answer the purpose for which it was intended. If when it is used to stamp on paper, or wax, it makes no impression that can be distinguished, it is of little value as a seal.

And so it is with churches. Many churches live so that you can not tell whether the impression they make is of Christ or of Belial. It is blurred; there is nothing clear or distinct. There are many churches whose impression is sharp and clear, and is of St. George and the dragon, the dragon being twice as large as St. George. There are many churches in which it is only a higher form of respectable worldliness that is manifested. There are many churches that live according to the prevailing fashions. There are hundreds of places that are excellent places of resort. There are plenty of churches where you can see the best-dressed people, and the most prosperous people. There are churches that are nothing but religious mutual insurance companies, and that agree to insure each other in this world and the world to come. And the community look upon them and say, "Well, these are well-to-do religious people, who on week days live in brown-stone houses, and on Sunday in brown-stone churches—lucky fellows!" I wonder that you do not put up some of the true names over churches—"Church of the Lucky Families;" "Church of the First Class "Church of People that are not Vulgar;" "Church of Prosperous Men;" "Church of the Long Purse," and so on. These titles would be very appropriate for some churches, judging from the average impression produced by them on the community. And I shall not shrink from having them applied to me and to you, so far as we deserve them. We must stand on our own merits. The

truth does not turn out of its course for any body. The truth must be spoken, if the heavens fall.

The average impression produced by the members of any church in a community determines how Christian or how unchristian they are. This is an immutable principle. And there is a moral organization in the human soul that responds to moral truth wherever it is found. And if, on the average, we, being Christians, make such an impression upon the consciousness of the world that they say they are better than we are, we are not living Christianly. We are bound to live, not only so that our Christian character shall be beautiful, but that it shall appear so. We are not to be mere paupers on other men's good opinions, but are to *command* men's opinions about us. It is the prerogative of power, not to take, but to command. We are bound to live so that the children in our families shall say of us, "They are Christians." We are bound to live so that men of other churches shall say, "What a pity that such good people do not belong to our sect!" For you know Christ is like a sportsman, who has pockets here, and pockets there, and pockets everywhere that he can find places for them in his clothes. And imagine a feud springing up among these pockets. One pocket says, "I am a thousand times better than that pocket." Another says, "No; you are low down; you are a little miserable, schismatic pocket down there. I am an apostolic pocket up here." All sects are merely pockets in the garments of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it does not make any difference whether you go to heaven in a side pocket or in a skirt pocket. To get into heaven is the main thing, after all. But these pocketous sects, looking upon this good priest or that good minister, say, "What a pity he is not in my pocket!" It is much more important that you should by your life produce such an effect that you should desire each other, than that you should be in any particular church. The thing is, to live so that your life shall be a witness of truth, and piety, and godliness.

I need not say how this compares with what are sometimes called reforming churches. God calls men to work for reforms; but he never calls them to work for reforms as if they were crocodiles. I really think the greatest obstacle to some reformations is the ugliness, the harshness, the bitterness, the uncharitableness, the unsymmetry, the moral unbeauty, of the men who advocate them. The reforms are well enough; but I can not swallow the reformers. Reformers must be fighters; but the prescription of the Bible is, "Speaking the truth *in love*." You can not speak the truth in love, and be long unbeautiful. The man that can thunder one moment, and shed tears the next, is the man that is most likely to carry a reform. The man that knows how to be gentle and sweet; the man that stands up for the

truth, and is patient, and glorious in his patience; the man that is not daunted by opposition, but that is not embittered, and carries himself sweetly and beautifully in the midst of oppositions—that man is the true reformer. Reforms do not need malign passions, like fire under a cauldron, to give them success. He is the true reformer who presents truth and principle in attractive forms. A cause is made beautiful by the radiancy of the man that presents it. No Christian man has any excuse for leaving an impression on the time in which he lives that he is unchristian. The fact that it is a time of strife and battle is no excuse. Cœur de Lion was a man, every inch, in time of battle. A true warrior was he, without reproach. He would not do a mean thing in the struggle any more than out of it. He was as much a man in battle as out of battle. And so we are to stand up for the truth, and to be brave men, not fearing men or the devil; and yet we are to be lovely while we are doing it. We are never to employ our malign feelings for the sake of gaining power or material by which to enforce the truth, which is always beautiful.

3. If this be so, we shall say, likewise, that the Bible is a book of superstition—only the superstition is in you, and not in the Bible. Men think that the Bible is in such a sense sacred that there is a moral quality in paper and in type. If a man should sit on the Bible accidentally, and see what it was, he would jump as if a serpent had bitten him. He would feel as if he had committed a sin almost, it was so sacred. And children are taught not only to believe the Bible, but to reverence it, and almost to go on tiptoe in the presence of it. It may minister to good instruction; but still there are a great many people who respect the Bible very much as the African does his amulet. As a man regards an amulet, so Christians regard certain things in which they think there is an influence of holiness, and which they think emit a holy fragrance. Many men who never read the Bible or study it think that somehow or other it will do them good. Many people make the Bible a mere charm.

See how this superstition is played upon. A man comes into court to swear, or affirm; and the judge says to him, "Hold up your hand." The clerk stops him, and says, "Are you a Protestant?" If he answers, "No," the judge calls for the Bible. A Protestant swears with his hand up; but a Catholic must put his hand on the Bible. But ah! that would not do; there is a refinement on that. If it is a plain Bible, he will put his hand on it very boldly; but turn it over, and show him a cross on the other side, and you can not get him to put his hand on it falsely. So you have charm upon charm.

A great many people think that the Bible is a very sacred book. I will tell you how it is a sacred book. If you read this book, and find moral qualities in it, and they are transferred as living virtues

to you, then to you it becomes a sacred book. This book is sacred to you just so far as its teachings are incorporated in your experience and feelings, and not a bit further. All that part of the Bible is Bible to you which you live by. So much of the Bible as you vitalize is valuable to you; but so much of it as you do not vitalize is of no use to you.

You put your Bible in your book-case. There it stands all the week, perhaps. Or, you read it once a day, or once a week, as the case may be. And you do it very decorously. The room is still, and your children sit around the room in a stiff row. You put on your spectacles and read; and as you read, you lower the key of your voice—for when men want to be religious, they always take a solemn note; and you read all the way through the chapter, and are like a blind man walking along a road where there are all sorts of flowers on both sides, never seeing a single one. Men read thus, and feel a great deal better because they have read the Bible to their family! Now, I tell you, the only thing you read in the Bible is that which jumps into you, and which you can not get out of you. It is the vital, luminous part, and not the dead letter that you read, if you read any part of the Bible.

Suppose I should set up housekeeping on the same principle that some people set up their religious housekeeping? A man goes to housekeeping, and gets a Bible, with his name on the inside, and his name on the outside, and puts it on the table, in his best room; and there it lies for months and years without being opened—unless there is a funeral in the family. Suppose I should go to housekeeping, and should give an order to the grocer for three boxes of sperm candles, saying, "I am going to have a luminous house," and should put those candles away in the attic, and never light one of them? What is the use of candles but to burn? That is the very figure of our Master. He says, "No man puts a candle under a bushel, but he lights it and puts it on a candlestick."

So much, then, of the Bible, as you take out, as a candle, lighting it, you read; and so much of it is to you a living oracle—no more. There is a vast amount of superstition about the Bible even in the Protestant churches.

There are many other points of application which time forbids me to dwell upon; but I will make only a single other.

No man has a right, who is called of God and made a new creature by the power of the Holy Ghost, and has in him the inspirations of divine love and truth, and believes himself to be a pilgrim to the other land, and to be an heir with Jesus Christ—no such man has a right to live a hidden life. There are a great many persons who, for reasons of conscience, or reasons of caution, or reasons of approbation,

or reasons of interest, withhold themselves from an open avowal of their adhesion to Christ, and of their real Christian life. But a man who lives so that men do not know that he is a Christian, is not one. If you succeed in hiding your piety from men, you will succeed in hiding it from God, too. The very idea of piety is luminousness.

I have no overweening attachment to the church as a physical organization. I am rather under than over the line on that subject. I believe that the church is useful; but I do not believe that any particular church on the face of the globe is ordained of God. I do not believe one church is any better than another so far as ordinance is concerned. I do not believe there is any pattern whatsoever laid down in the New Testament according to which churches should be organized. I believe that churches stand on the same ground that common schools and literary institutions do. They are found to be useful, and to promote man's growth, and so they are right. Churches stand on the same ground that governments stand on. God did not ordain a republican government, or a monarchical government, or a mixed government. He created men social beings, so that they needed governments, and left them to choose such as they wanted. I believe there is that in every human being which needs association and society for the best development of itself; but what the particular form of that association or society should be has not been prescribed Every church is good enough that answers the purposes of a church. Every government is good enough that answers the purposes of a government.

All churches are therefore in some sense apostolic; but no church on the face of the earth is apostolic in the sense of having descended from the apostles. Those churches are supreme impertinences that undertake to say that they present to the world the line and lineament of the architect of Peter or Paul. There is no vestige of any ordinances that they handed down to us. You might as well say that they gave us patterns of houses to live in, as that they gave us patterns of ordinances. I believe that ordinances, external forms, are matters of utter indifference. Baptism is baptism, whether it be affusion, or sprinkling, or immersion. The Lord's Supper, if it be administered by a pope, is good enough; if it be administered by a cardinal, it is good enough; if it be administered by a priest or a minister, it is good enough; if it be administered by the father in the family, it is good enough; and if there is no one else to administer it, and you administer it to yourself, it is just as good. The Lord's Supper belongs to every man that belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ; and he has just as much right to administer it to himself as to have it administered to him by a priest.

In regard to churches, ordinances, and governments, I take the broadest ground, and say that they are useful, but that there is not one of them that is obligatory, as having warrant in Scripture; and no man can come to us saying, "Thus saith the Lord," in respect to them. But while I hold that broad and catholic ground, I say that because the gathering together of men for good and holy purposes has for generations and ages been proved to be useful, therefore it is a duty. The experience of nations has shown that men can not well live secret Christian lives, and that it is far better that they should make a public profession of their religious faith, and live open and disclosed lives; and hence men are bound to let the world know that they are Christians. Select what communion you please; but somewhere you should stand up before men and openly avow your adhesion to Christ, because it is the testimony of centuries that such a course is best. You are bound to bear witness that the life you now live in the flesh, you live by faith in the Son of God, who loved you, and gave himself for you. You have no right to be a secret Christian. You have no right to hide your piety. You have no right to allow men to say of you, "He is a moralist, but he is not a Christian." You are bound to let your light shine. You are bound to be an eminent Christian, so that your Christianity shall be apparent to all men. You are bound to be a Christian; and then you are bound to make an open declaration, just as when we marry. Do you suppose that is the wedding, when the young man and his blushing bride stand up and exchange vows? The wedding took place when their two hearts rushed together as one, and when they clasped each other, and said, "Thine for life; mine for life." Their souls are married first; but they are obliged then to stand up before law and institution and custom, and openly say, "This is what we have done." This declarative and open wedding is necessary for morality, for decency, for reasons right and proper. The marriage of the souls comes first. Afterward there is the reaffirmation before men. And every soul ought to be married to Christ. Every soul should clasp him with secret faith. And then there should be the standing up and bearing outward, public testimony before men.

My Christian brethren, I take my share of this truth. I have great comfort in one of Paul's declarations. After he had set forth the ideal of godliness, after he had painted a glowing picture of it, the thought occurred to him, "These people may perhaps say, 'Do you live so high as that? Are you as good as that?'" And then he said, "Not that I have attained." Every man ought to preach a hundred times better than he practices. It is a vulgar and absurd fling that men make when they say, "Do you practice as much as you preach?" I should be ashamed if I did not make my ideal travel faster than my hands and feet. I am not half so good a man as I tell you to be. I am not half

so good a minister as I ought to be. I know my own imperfections. "I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." I see what the way is, and I am trying, according to my feeble strength, to walk in that way. And I make it broader and plainer to you; hoping that many of you will be a great deal better Christians than I am. I do not envy you. If God gives me grace to stand, as by fire, in his presence, and I see going up by ranks far above me, you that I have taught, you that I have baptized, you that I have led out of mighty sins and temptations, I shall not envy you. It will be enough to have the least place in heaven, and join with you in the common praise and thanksgiving to God.

Let us every one press forward, open, avowed Christians, carrying Christian truth in Christian love and Christian contentment, in the beauty of holinesss.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

GRANT, our Father, that all the clouds that lie between us and the heavenly, gate may be parted, at least at times, that we may renew our faith, and refresh our hope in the belief of the coming joy and rest of the heavenly land. Grant that we may see how great is the glory of the saints, and how blessed the estate of just men made perfect. And may we so desire the perfection of the other state that we shall be willing to bear the furnace and the anvil, whilst thou dost cleanse us by the fire and form us by the hammer. Grant that we may neither mourn nor despond because thou art dealing with us as with children. Grant that we may have such a desire for the things of manhood, and of *Christian* manhood, that we may so desire to stand in eminence of virtue and of true piety, that all the suffering which it costs shall seem to us as a trifle—as the very dust. May we long to have that purity of heart which shall enable us to see God. What is there to be seen, what picture, what vision, what beauty anywhere, that can compare with the sight of our Lord! What attainment, what riches, what mere earthly joys are there that can compare with the joys which thou hast in reserve, and a foretaste of which thou dost grant to thy people by the way? Oh! give to us such a sense of thy being, and of thy nearness to us, and of the reality of life beyond the grave; grant that we may have such a clasping faith by which to take hold of all that are gone out from among us, and are standing a little way apart because a little way above us, that we may every day live as seeing Him who is invisible, and by faith in the invisible world.

We pray that thou wilt temper thy providences according to our strength. Lay not upon us burdens which break us clear down to the earth, but give us strength that we may lift the cross, and then be lifted by it.

Grant, we beseech of thee, that we may know how to sacrifice sin, and how to crucify the affections which are foreign to a divine life. All that is hateful, all that is carnal, all that is selfish, all that is soul-humbling—grant that we may know how to overcome it. May we know how to lay aside every weight. Grant that we may follow in the footsteps of our Master, and become worthy soldiers under such a banner as Christ's. Deliver us, we beseech of thee, from the power of the world in which we live. May we have dominion over it, and not it over us. May we be long patient with men. May we not seek to magnify their faults, nor desire to punish them. May they be ours in the spirit of our Master, to heal. May we overcome evil with good. May we be patient, and long-suffering. And while we abhor that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good, may it be in mercy. May we seek rather to build up than to cast down; to beautify, than to mar; may we learn to live so that our whole life shall be luminous; so that men shall know that we are Christ's, as we know which are flowers, and which are not.

Grant, we beseech of thee, O God! that we may this day draw near to thee to confess all our sins. May we seek to hide nothing from thee. May we rejoice that we have a place so safe where we can disburden our guilt, and make mention of all our imperfections and faults. We do not come to make confession at thy feet, driven hither. We come gladly. Not more glad are laborers to wash their wearied bodies in the cooling stream, and cleanse themselves for health and cheer, than are we to confess to thee in those hours when our soul needs to confess; needs to cleanse itself in the air of love, in the divine confidence, certain that God is not angry, and will not reveal, nor smile in contempt. He will not chide. He will not make mention again of our transgressions. With loving-kindness more than a mother's or a father's, thou wilt lift up those that confess their sin to thee, and wilt give them strength to overcome it, and wilt lead them up step by step and range by range, until they stand perfected in true holiness.

O Lord! we pray that thou wilt teach us to abhor that which is evil in ourselves more than in others. May we be charitable to others, but uncharitable to ourselves, utterly refusing to palliate, or to in any way soften our own offenses. May we desire to be scourged with our own honest thoughts. May we desire to measure ourselves more fully than other men measure us, and require of ourselves more than they require of us. Toward others may we be gentle and beauteous. May we be easy to be entreated. May we desire that which is good in them. May we not love that which is evil, to see it, or to report it. May we desire rather to build men up in Christian faith and Christian purity. Forgive us that we have been so uncharitable in days that are past, and forgive us if still the poison linger in us. Oh! grant that we may see the beauty and the power of love, and that we may feel the sweet blessedness of this experience in our own souls. Oh! may we speak its language, and be prepared thus to speak the heavenly language.

We pray that thou wilt bless all thy people, now, that are offering their gifts to thee—their gratitude, their affections, their supplications, and their desires.

Lord Jesus, speak to every heart in thy presence, that it may know that it is heard. May every one know that Christ hath called him by name. Be thou a Friend to every one, and make every one feel that he is dear to thee.

And we beseech of thee that thou wilt help every one of thy people to bear the lot and burden which thou hast appointed for him. May we not believe that trouble comes from the ground. May we not relieve the moment's pain and ache believing that it comes only from blind natural law. May every one be composed and stable, and believe that our heavenly Father manages life and ourselves, and permeates all things, and causes all things to work together for good to those that love him.

Grant that we may accept our troubles as a part of the divine commission. May we seek not so much to be rid of them as to turn them to account. May we graft the thorn with the rose, and though the thorn may be there, may there be blossoms mounting over the vine. Grant that we may learn the lessons of peace from the lips of sorrow; that with heart-ache, we may learn heart-joy. May we not think that it is for us to live here forever, nor seek to build foundations deeper or broader. Who can build so that death shall not ransack all his works? Oh! that we might live in our own thought for a better manhood, for immortality, and for glory! May we not seek, therefore, to compass the great ends of joy in this world. May we look forward. May we walk together as pilgrims seeking that other and better city, whose Builder and whose Maker is God. There, in that city, are the blessed. There, our hearts tell us are ours—our children, our parents, brothers and sisters that are dear to us, and companions many. And though we hear them not outwardly, yet we hear them; and though we see them not outwardly, we behold them; and though we are separated from them we were never so near to them; and though they are gone, they are everlastingly present; and though they are dead, they live, and live forever. It is we that are dead, and they that are alive. Grant that there may come to us through faith and trust that spiritual awaking by which the absent shall be present, and the unseen shall be visible, and things that are not, mightier upon us and in us than things that are. So may we live, in the midst of this world, evermore, not far from thee, within the sound of thy voice, that at last when thou shalt call us in death, it shall be as the sound of music to us—a joyful call, long waited for. And may we follow quicker than the soldier follows his trumpet; quicker than love follows the voice of love. May we, when death shall call us, rejoice to depart and be with Christ, which is better than life.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit, evermore. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

OUR Father, wilt thou bless the word spoken. Grant that it may do good to every one. Cleanse us from superstition; from misconception; from narrow and degrading apprehensions of truth. Bring us into the vital sympathy of thine own self. Breathe upon us, and brood upon us. Give life from thine own life. And grant that we may so live that men shall think that religion is more beautiful than nature; that Christ is transcendently heroic; that all men may desire to be ranked under his banner, and called by his name, and accepted in his name. And to Father, Son, and Spirit shall be the praise. *Amen.*

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Its Directors are among the first men for character and wealth in the country.

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Its membership is as *carefully selected* as that of any company

It is a mutual company, with the important addition that its directors are all *personally interested* in its affairs, and it treats all its members with EQUAL JUSTICE AND LIBERALITY.

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INSURANCE COMPANY,

No. 102 Broadway,

NEW-YORK.

STATEMENT OF JANUARY 1, 1869:

Cash Capital, . . .	$500,000 00
Surplus, ...	1,566,854 10
Cash Assets, . . .	2,066,854 10

THE CONTINENTAL INSURANCE COMPANY insures against loss and damage by fire on all kinds of buildings, merchandise, household furniture, farm property, including stock, rents, leases, and all other insurable property, at REASONABLE RATES OF PREMIUM, on the "PARTICIPATION" PLAN, dividing three-fourths of the profits to its customers in scrip bearing interest at six per cent. per annum, redeemable in cash in the order of its issue, as rapidly as the accumulation represented by the scrip exceeds the sum of $500,000.

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CYRUS PECK, SECRETARY. H. H. LAMPORT, VICE-PREST.

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